

# Spotlight on District Four

June, 2001



## Dear Neighbors:

This has definitely been a year of challenges for Montgomery County. An uncertain economy coupled with the demands of a fast-growing school population made this year's \$2.7 billion budget one of difficult choices. And despite these challenges, the Council managed to fund more all-day kindergarten and reductions in class size, strengthen public safety, maintain library services and recreation opportunities without increased taxes. I was one of the leading advocates against raising taxes.

I continue to be concerned about the future. The Council must take a hard look at each department and program to assure tax dollars are spent wisely. At my urging, the Council will undertake several such in-depth budget reviews each year.

Your comments and correspondence are always welcome. They help me with the most important decisions affecting our communities. Thank you for another year of support.

**Councilmember Marilyn J. Praisner**

## CHILDREN FIRST

Children continue to be our most valuable asset and in what proved to be a challenging year for Montgomery County, the Council was still able to strengthen schools, protect library services and recreation. We are expecting 3,500 new students to enter our school system this coming fall. To keep stride with the improvements we have made so far, the Council boosted the schools budget by \$107 million, for a total of \$1.3 billion. More than half the County's budget goes to our schools.

Montgomery College plays a key role in turning out the educated work force we need in the "new economy." Because the college is vital to our County's continued economic health, the Council added \$3 million to the college's budget over what the County Executive proposed for more faculty and staff development.

Public safety also remains a top priority. To improve pedestrian safety and deter red-light running, the Council funded an additional 15 new "red light" cameras that will rotate among 20 additional intersections throughout the County. A new traffic analyst in the police department will examine crucial information on vehicular and pedestrian accidents so the County can identify and develop solutions for problem areas.

As the Council's representative on the County's Pedestrian Safety Task Force, I have been working with community and government representatives on education, enforcement and engineering initiatives. Our comprehensive plan of improvements is due out this December.

The police will hire full-time victim assistants in each of the five main district police stations to aid citizens who have been the victim of crime. And the Council approved \$1.1 million to begin work on an Integrated Justice Information System to assure that Montgomery County's entire criminal justice system functions in a coordinated, efficient way. This system is vital to improve criminal prosecutions and notify crime victims of important milestones in their cases.

## LEGACY OPEN SPACE

The County continues to make progress with its commitment to preserve open space within what is fast becoming an urban area. The latest strategy is the Legacy Open Space program, which utilizes a number of development options and funding sources to protect exceptional natural resources, watersheds, historic sites, greenways and farmland.



Photo by Carl Iseli



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The Council will act on the Legacy Open Space functional master plan in July. Sensitive properties in the Upper Paint Branch watershed are also protected through Special Protection Area regulations.

## DELIVERING ON SCHOOLS

The Council's boost in school spending for next year will allow MCPS to expand all-day kindergarten to 17 additional elementary schools, including many in District Four (Bel Pre, Georgian Forest, Greencastle, Jackson Road, and Kemp Mill), and to reduce class size in many half-day kindergarten programs. The budget also adds more teachers in honors and Advanced Placement classes, more guidance counselors and building service workers, and funds teacher salary increases and training.

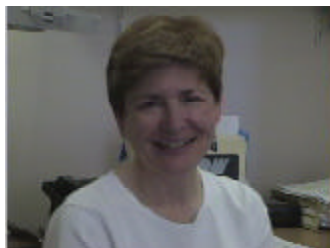
The Council also voted to preserve **Outdoor Education**, a valuable program that gives 6th graders an opportunity for hands-on learning experience in an outdoor setting. Maydale Nature Center will also continue to receive outdoor education staff support.

Significant growth throughout the school system requires building new schools and modernizing existing ones, straining the school system's construction budget. This comes at a time when regional construction costs have skyrocketed. In response, the Board of Education, with Council concurrence, imposed a 90-day moratorium on bidding for school construction projects, starting in late May. As a result some elementary school modernizations will be delayed.

- **Page Elementary School** will still move to a holding facility at Fairland Center this summer. Depending on when their modernization begins, they will move back to a new Page sometime during the September, 2002 - June, 2003 academic year.

### **Pat Brennan...**

*Pat specializes in education issues for the Praisner Office. She works part-time. If you have any questions, concerns or comments about the Montgomery County Public School System or a particular school in District 4, please call Pat at 240- 777- 7824.*



A student at Burnt Mills Elementary School places flowers in a memorial garden near their newly built gymnasium in remembrance of former Principal Nancy Grace.

- **Burnt Mills Elementary School** has a beautiful new gym. I got my first look at it during the dedication ceremony on May 25, 2001.
- **Wood Middle School** modernization is scheduled for completion this summer. Students and staff will be back in their school this September.
- **Rockville High School** will move to Northwood in September 2002. Their modernization should be finished in time for the September 2004- June 2005 academic year.
- **Belt Junior High School.** The Council approved a MCPS request to reclaim Belt as a second middle school for the Wheaton Cluster. This will relieve serious overcrowding in both the Wheaton and Einstein Clusters and will significantly improve delivery of academic programs in those areas. MCPS hopes to have Belt ready by September 2005.

The Council approved planning money for several new modernizations and additions. However, the timetable for construction of these projects and scheduled school modernizations will depend on the availability of funds for capital projects countywide. The Council will evaluate all county-funded projects next year as we develop the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for FY03-08.

## DOWN COUNTY CONSORTIUM

MCPS continues to plan for a consortium in the downcounty area comprised of Blair, Einstein, Kennedy, Northwood, and Wheaton High School clusters. Northwood will join the consortium when it reopens in September 2004 with grades 9-11. The consortium will feature a signature program at each of the schools and a student assignment plan patterned after the preferred choice model of the

Northeast Consortium. The Board of Education has applied for a federal grant to develop the signature programs. If funded, the grant would allow the opening of new signature programs starting with ninth grade students in fall 2002.

## SITE 2 SLATED FOR PERMANENT CLOSURE

In a letter that spells out the final chapter to the long saga of Site 2, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has said it will forgive grants totaling more than \$30 million and allow the facility to close permanently. Although Site 2, the perennially smelly Regional Composting Facility which processed sewage sludge, was shut down by County officials in February, 1999, final authority for closure rested with the EPA.

I personally worked very hard to close Site 2, lobbying other officials and documenting financial and operational problems.

## PARTNERSHIPS AT WORK: OPEN HOUSE AT MAYDALE

One of the "gems" of the East County is Maydale Nature Center, a small neighborhood park located off of Briggs Chaney Road at Claude Lane. Nestled in the midst of a number of communities, Maydale boasts a wide variety of plants and wildlife in a quiet, unspoiled setting. On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Park and Planning Commission and I jointly sponsored an open house to celebrate the restored park, its new programs and the partnership between the Montgomery County Schools, the community and the Parks Department. I helped facilitate the partnership when the park was threatened with closure in the 1990s.

### *Claire Iseli...*

*Claire specializes in planning issues for the Praisner Office. She works part-time and is responsible for all master plan, zoning, and housing matters. Please contact Claire about any concerns you may have about District Four planning issues at 240-777-7986.*



photo by Carl Iseli

**Councilmember Praisner (right) awards a certificate of appreciation to David Dunmire (left) from the Eyes of Paint Branch and Bob Ferraro (center) of Trout Unlimited for their efforts to support the Maydale Nature Center.**

Highlights of the day included presentations on the MCPS early childhood environmental science program at Maydale; the Parks Department's construction of a new wetland area and a "fish ladder" designed to allow trout and other fish to swim upstream and spawn; and a new initiative by the Friends of Maydale to establish a resource center.

I presented certificates of appreciation to groups and individuals that have made contributions to Maydale. Those receiving certificates: **Eagle Scout Ben Evans**, for his "Self-Guided Nature Trail" project; **Donna and Matt Bevan**, for designing and constructing bird-identification and scent-box displays for the early-childhood classroom; the **Eyes of Paint Branch** and **Trout Unlimited**, for their ongoing contributions to Maydale, including the installation of an information kiosk at the park's entrance; and the **Montgomery County Outdoor Education Association** and **Randy Ricketts** of the **Wild Bird Center**, for an animal feeding station.

## NEIGHBORHOODS TO CALL HOME

Many of our neighborhoods are aging. To keep communities healthy, the Council has committed funding for neighborhood revitalization. To that end, the County will work hard with property owners, civic associations and tenant groups to renovate older properties and give new life to older neighborhoods.

Affordable housing is also a concern of many citizens of Montgomery County. Housing here continues to be out of reach for many family budgets. To help address the need for affordable housing, the Council set aside \$15



million for the County's Housing Initiative. Providing loans and grants, the County partners with the Housing Opportunities Commission and non-profit and for-profit developers to build, acquire and preserve affordable housing.

## SENIOR HOUSING: TOP PRIORITY

One of the top priorities for the fund will be affordable senior housing. At my request, the Council asked the Park and Planning Commission to review senior housing needs for the next ten years in Montgomery County. The report, which was recently released, will be reviewed by the Council in the coming months to determine what steps we need to take to assure our seniors are able to stay in Montgomery County throughout their golden years. We will be looking at a range of solutions.

## GUARDING OUR NATURAL TREASURES

Concerns about recent violations in the Paint Branch Special Protection Area (SPA) prompted me to sponsor legislation that requires owners of properties in special protection areas to disclose this fact when selling. Both buyers and sellers should know whether their property is in a SPA.

Streams in Montgomery County, including those in parkland, on private property, and in your neighborhood, are an important part of the natural resources of our county. We all play a part in keeping streams, and plant and animal life, strong and vital. The County protects key streams by designating a part or all of a watershed a SPA, an area where streams, wetlands, and other natural features are of very high quality and where special measures (over and above standard environmental laws, regulations, and guidelines) must be applied to land development and to certain land uses in order to protect the high quality conditions of these natural features.

To find out if you live in a SPA or to learn more about them, visit: <http://www.mc-mncppc.org/envIRON/SPA/index.htm#map>.

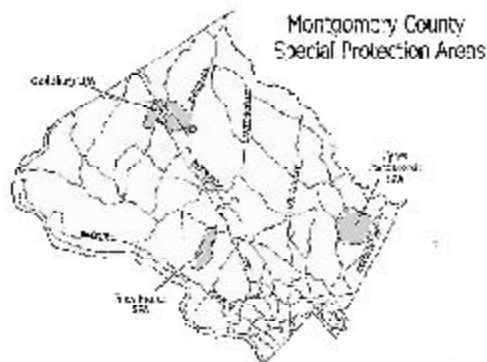


Photo by Carl Iseli

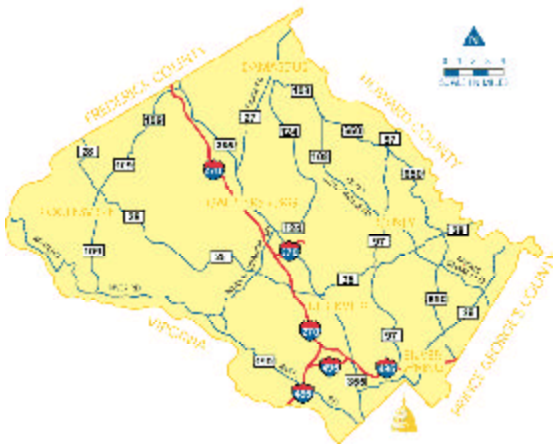
## HELPING NEIGHBORS

Montgomery Babies, a program I spearheaded two years ago, is now in every County hospital that births babies: Montgomery General, Holy Cross, Shady Grove Adventist and Washington Adventist. All new mothers and their infants are offered an assessment. These voluntary screenings identify specific needs and refer the mother and baby to services. It has been shown that giving new mothers the resources they need right from the start helps assure healthier, more well-adjusted children.

I pushed hard to assure that the East County Services Center, which will open in July, will have a full-time client assistance worker to help citizens who need County services.

The Council included nearly \$1 million to fund transportation programs for seniors. These initiatives help seniors stay active and involved in their communities.

To ensure good health in our minority communities, the Council funded \$100,000 to plan for the Latino Health Initiative and \$367,000 for the African American Health Initiative, which will focus on AIDs, diabetes, hypertension and infant mortality.



## GETTING AROUND...

The Montgomery County Transportation Policy Report (TPR) Task Force, a Council initiative being led by Park and Planning, is underway to identify what's needed to improve mobility in Montgomery County, to enhance livability in neighborhoods and promote business centers. Several District 4 residents serve on the TPR group, which is



currently working on its second round of forecasting and analysis. Opportunities for public involvement are listed in the website: <http://www.mc-mnccppc.org/move/index.html>. A general public meeting is planned for mid-September.

## DISTRICT 4 ROAD PROJECTS

**Norbeck Road Extended** – Work continues on this 2.95-mile extension connecting Norbeck Road (MD 28) to Spencerville Road (MD 198) at New Hampshire Avenue (MD 650). The road is scheduled to open in November 2002. During construction, Norwood Road between Ednor Road and New Hampshire Avenue will be closed for 11 months beginning on or about August 15, 2001. It is scheduled to reopen in July 2002. Access to properties within the limits of road closure, including Blake High School will be maintained at all times. I have worked with the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) to minimize the impact of this project on surrounding neighborhoods and Blake High School.

The State Highway Administration (SHA) has substantially completed work on Layhill Road (MD 182) at Norwood Road. The New Hampshire Avenue and Ednor Road intersection reconstruction will also be complete before Norwood Road is closed.

### Sherry Kinikin

*Sherry specializes in transportation, environment, public safety and Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission issues. If you have any questions, concerns or comments about roads, solid waste, environment or public safety in District 4, call Sherry at 240-777-7922.*



**Old Columbia Pike Sidewalks** – Sidewalk construction is complete from Nalls Lane to Spencerville Road (MD 198). The second phase from Nalls Lane to East Randolph Road will begin in June 2002. In response to school concerns regarding access to Banneker Middle School, a reconstruction project to improve safety at the intersection of Perrywood Road is also planned. At my request, the surrounding community will be given an opportunity to comment on DPWT proposals before they are finalized.

**Briggs Chaney Road East of US 29** – The road will be widened from US 29 east to Gentry Ridge Court. Construction is scheduled to be complete in Fiscal Year 2004.

**Greencastle Road** – reconstruction from 400 feet south of the Robey Road intersection to Greencastle Ridge Terrace (approximately 2,100 feet) is in preliminary design. Construction is expected to begin in 2005.



**Fairland Road** – Detailed engineering for a reconstructed three-lane road is continuing for Fairland Road east of US 29 to Briggs Chaney Road. The project manager is Michael Mitchell at 240-777-7262

**US 29 Sidewalks** – This project, approved in 1998, includes the construction of five-foot sidewalks along both sides of US 29 from Lorain Avenue to Burnt Mills Avenue. This project is planned to provide continuity of pedestrian access between University Boulevard and Prelude Drive; and provide 700 feet of missing sidewalks links on the east side of Lockwood Drive from US 29 to New Hampshire Avenue. A sidewalk of 3,300 feet is planned for the west side of US 29. Retaining walls and guardrails are being considered to reduce impacts to adjacent homeowners and increase pedestrian safety. A community meeting is planned for late summer or early fall. Please call Wayne Christiansen at 240-777-7195 with questions.

**White Oak Transit Center** – A technical feasibility study has been initiated for this project. This transit center, which is part of the White Oak Master Plan, may have up to six bus bays and a parking lot and will serve as a major transfer location for the eastern county. The project manager is Rob Klein at 240-777-7195.

## State Highway Administration to improve the following intersections:

**US 29 at East Randolph Road** – Construction of a grade-separated interchange is planned to begin in Spring 2002. Construction will occur in phases and will take place slightly to the north of the existing intersection to allow traffic to move through the intersection during construction. SHA plans to begin construction of a detour road with utility relocation at the end of October. Night work is planned. I have requested that SHA consider additional landscaping and berms to reduce noise impact both during construction and when the interchange is complete.

**US 29 at MD 198** – SHA has scaled down the size of the grade-separated interchange being designed for this location. Blackburn Road improvements are no longer being considered as part of this interchange. US 29 will be relocated to the east of the Burtonsville Shopping Center as part of this project. Construction will begin in summer 2002.

**US 29 at Briggs Chaney Road** – SHA is in the detail design stage on this grade-separated intersection. Construction is planned for fall 2003. Melinda Peters is project manager for all three of the grade-separated interchanges. She can be reached at SHA at 410-545-8772.

**Connecticut Avenue (MD 185) at Veirs Mill Road (MD 586) and Veirs Mill Road at Randolph Road** intersections are scheduled for reconstruction in summer 2003. **Veirs Mill Road and Aspen Hill Road** intersection changes are scheduled for construction in fall 2003.

**Georgia Avenue (MD 97) at Norbeck Road (MD28)** (SHA project manager is Sue Rajan at 410-545-8514 or 800-548-5026) and **Georgia Avenue at Randolph Road** (SHA project manager is Joel Oppenheimer at 410-837-5840) are both funded for the detailed study phase of project planning for grade-separated interchanges.

**MD 28/MD 198** - SHA is conducting a project planning study to improve 28/198 from Georgia Avenue to I-95. The County master plans call for a four-lane road. SHA project manager is Shawn Burnett at 410-545-8531 or 800-548-



# CONGRATULATIONS PAINT BRANCH TEAMS!

I was excited to welcome two Paint Branch High School teams to the Montgomery County Council and present them with proclamations for winning Maryland State Championships.

Paint Branch High School Boys Wrestling Team (right) and Paint Branch High School Girls Basketball Team (lower right)



## ***Anita Epps...***

*Anita is the Legislative Administrative Aide in the Praisner Office. She oversees office administration, handles all appointments for Ms. Praisner, data base development, as well as other duties. Please feel free to contact Anita at 240-777-7968.*



## ***Joy Nurmi...***

*Joy oversees office operations in addition to covering issues concerning cable service, health & human services, domestic violence, juvenile justice, housing and child welfare. Please contact Joy about any concerns you may have in District Four at 240-777-7953.*



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County Executive Douglas Duncan (left) joins Matthew Krieger, Councilmember Marilyn Praisner and Burtonsville Elementary School Principal Melissa Smith to cut the ribbon for the new Burtonsville Elementary School Access Road, which will provide safe access for the school and a new traffic signal at Old Columbia Pike and MD 198.



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